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CHARACTER IN THE "MATTER OF ENGLAND" ROMANCES.

For the student of medieval life and literature the *dramatis personæ* of the romances—conventional as they are, and conventional as the romancers' treatment of them often is—are of no little interest. Professor Comfort's studies in the *chansons de geste*¹ have shown the importance of a knowledge of the character types of the French epic for an appreciation of the ideals and culture of medieval France. In this paper an attempt will be made to investigate, on a somewhat broader plan,² the four most important of the "matter of England" romances—*King Horn*, *Havelok the Dane*, *Bevis of Hamtoun*, and *Guy of Warwick*.³

Character stands in a peculiar relation to the other narrative elements of the metrical romance. It is, of course, never emphasized. Yet when romance after romance has been read, and a host of incidents have been forgotten, characteristic personalities stand out, which, modern English literature proves, have been of abiding interest. The more distinguished names—Gawain, Kay, Lancelot, Tristram, Iseult—were the fruit of a romance-activity which stands in strong contrast with the more popular art of *Horn* and *Havelok*. Yet the heroes of this seemingly more primitive group typify, I think, ideals of permanent interest. Appearing, as they do, in situations and relations

¹ "The Character Types in the Old French Chansons de Geste," *Pub. Mod. Lang. Assn.*, vol. xxi, pp. 279 ff.; "The Heroic Ideal in the French Epic," *Quarterly Review*, April, 1908.

² Many suggestions as to method have been obtained from the studies in narrative of Professor W. M. Hart, especially *Ballad and Epic*, Harvard Studies and Notes, vol. xi, Boston, 1907.

³ References are made to the following editions: *King Horn*, ed. by Joseph Hall, Oxford, 1901; *Havelok the Dane*, ed. by W. W. Skeat, Oxford, 1902; *Bevis of Hamtoun*, ed. by E. Kölbing, E. E. Text Soc., Ex. Ser. xlv, xlvi, xlvi, lxv, London, 1885-1894; *Guy of Warwick*, Auchinleck and Caius Mss., ed. by J. Zupitza, E.E.T.S. Ex. Ser. xlii, xlix, lix, London, 1883-1891.

thoroughly stereotyped, they are perhaps more interesting for that reason, have more of the medieval flavor, gain in representative quality. If they are deficient in subtlety, they are not deficient in a crude strength of character and will, perennially attractive.

For these reasons it will be seen that characterization, to an unusual degree, perhaps, is bound up with plot on the one hand, and with the broad background of medieval life on the other, and it will be necessary, in discussing it, to trespass somewhat upon these other fields.

The Group.

The well-known tendency of the *dramatis personæ* of medieval romance to fall into certain conventional relations is well illustrated by a group of characters which appears, with certain variations, in *Horn*, in *Bevis*, and in *Guy*. This group seems to belong naturally to stories of the exile-and-return type, but it is not restricted to them, as it appears very clearly in the *Guy*. Nor is it essential to the exile-and-return type, since it does not appear, unless faintly, in *Havelok*. The following table shows the correspondence:

	<i>Horn</i>	<i>Bevis</i>	<i>Guy</i>
The father	Murri	Guy	[Syward]
The hero	Horn	Bevis	Guy
The old friend	Apelbrus	Saber	Herhaud
The young friend	Apulf	Terri	Tirri
The foreign king	Aylmar	Ermin	Ernis
The foreign king's daughter	Rymenhild	Josian	Clarice
The defamer	Fikenhild	Two knights	Morgadour
The second lady	Reynild	King of Aum- before's daughter	[Oisel]

These lists might be paralleled, in part, with another from *Havelok*, as well as from romances far removed from this group, but as the relations of the *dramatis personæ* are not so clearly the same in these other cases, I have not thought it worth while to insist on the parallel. However, the possibility of making the table which here appears is not without significance,

and a very fundamental resemblance will, I think, appear on closer investigation.⁴

In respect to the hero's father the resemblance is incomplete. *Guy of Warwick* is not a story of the exile-and-return type, and Guy's father plays a comparatively unimportant part in the story. In *Horn* and in *Bevis* the resemblance is clear. In both cases the father is of very high rank, Murri being King of Suddenne and Guy the Earl of South Hampton, of noble character and approved prowess. Both are slain at the opening of the story, being overpowered by numbers, and their possessions, in both cases, are seized by those who have slain them—in the one case by the Saracens, and in the other by Devoun, Emperor of Almaine. Both leave young heirs who are helpless to protect their dominions. Birkabein, father of Havelok and King of Denmark, occupies an analogous position. He dies leaving his young heir in the power of a traitor, who seizes the kingdom. This situation is repeated in the same poem in the death of Apelwold, leaving his daughter and the Kingdom of England in the care of a traitor. Thus in each of the three romances of the exile-and-return type there is a king who dies, leaving a young son in the hands of enemies.

The children of these three fathers⁵ too early dead experience a similar fortune. Horn, sent out in a boat to find a grave in the sea, luckily reaches the coast of Westernesse. Bevis, narrowly escaping death at the hands of his own mother, is sold into slavery and borne across the seas to Armenia. Havelok, after heart-breaking sufferings, likewise crosses the sea in a boat to find a home at Grimsby. Guy had no such experiences in his earlier days, but gained manhood at his own home. It is his

⁴Leo Jordan, *Über Boeve de Hanstone*, Beihefte zur *Zeitschrift für rom. Phil.* (xiv, Halle, 1908), pp. 41 f., gives a list of *dramatis personæ* in French exile stories which is not quite the same as the one above. However, it is interesting as showing that practically this same group of characters appears in a number of *chansons de geste*. Among the English romances, *Generydes* furnishes the list of *dramatis personæ* most nearly parallel.

⁵Not counting Apelwold, the father of a heroine.

later career which brings him into the company of Horn and Bevis, as will appear in the discussion of the other typical characters.

Curiously enough, Horn, Bevis, and Guy each have for teacher a kind, brave man, who remains a steadfast friend. Apelbrus taught Horn the craft of wood and river, as well as harping, carving, and serving the cup (vv. 229 ff.). Later he assists in the love affair of Horn and Rymenhild; and finally he is rewarded with a kingdom (vv. 1507 f.). However, the resemblance between *Guy* and *Bevis*, here as elsewhere, is much stronger. Saber is the "meister" of Bevis. After keeping Bevis concealed as long as he can, he is obliged to see him banished, but later sends his son to seek the lad; and he himself accompanies Bevis in some of his adventures. Almost the same thing happens in the case of Herhaud.

Gij a forster fader hadde,
 patte him lerd & him radde
 Of wodes & riuer & oper game;

Herhaud of Ardern was his name (vv. 169 ff.).

Herhaud, too, is a fellow-soldier of his friend, and himself seeks Guy when lost. Herhaud is also tutor to Guy's son Reinbrun, seeks him through many lands when he is stolen away, and in general stands in the same relation to the son that he did to the father. Like Saber, Herhaud has a warlike son who plays a part in the romance. Like him, too, he is warned in dreams when the hero is in need of assistance. Grim has certain points of contact with these characters, particularly with Saber. Both Grim and Saber are instructed to slay their charges, and both represent that they have done so. Thus in each of these romances there is an old friend who guards the early years of the hero; in three cases he is the tutor; and in the fourth case he stands in the general relation of guide and instructor, teaching, however, not knightly accomplishments, but the meaner duties of labor.

In three of the romances there is a young friend who is the faithful helper of his superior. In the fourth romance, *Havelok*,

there is only the semblance of an equivalent in the three sons of Grim. But Apulf in *Horn*, Terri in *Bevis*, and Tirri in *Guy*, occupy corresponding positions. In two of the cases the friend is presented with a bride and territory by the hero. Thus Reynild is given to Apulf, and the daughter of the King of Aumbeforce agrees to become the wife of Terri when she learns that Bevis is beyond her reach. Guy also plays an important, though not similar, part in securing Oisel for Tirri. In the case of Terri and Bevis and of Tirri and Guy the friendship lasts through many battles in which the comrades fight side by side.

The term *foreign king* refers in *Horn* and in *Bevis* to the father of the heroine. The Emperor of Constantinople, in *Guy*, occupies a somewhat analogous position. Bevis and Horn are welcomed at the courts of the foreign kings. Each is granted honors, but later is the victim of a false friend (two in *Bevis*), who misrepresents the relations existing between the hero and the king's daughter. This, so far, is true of Guy at Constantinople also. But the Emperor of Constantinople is not misled, while both the King of Westernesse and the King of Armenia trust the informers, and as a consequence the hero in one case is banished (*Bevis*, vv. 1229 ff.) and in the other is sent on a mission which is intended to result in his death (*Guy*, vv. 3727 ff.). Thus in the portions of the stories connected respectively with the foreign kings the three romances show strikingly similar characteristics.

The term *defamer* indicates sufficiently well the characteristic quality of one of the conventional enemies of the hero in these romances. Thus Fikenhild tells Ailmar that Horn

"liþ in bure

Vnder couerture

By Rymenhild þi doȝter" (vv. 695ff.).

Similarly, the false knights whom Bevis had preserved in battle said of Bevis to the Emperor that

"þe douȝter he haþ now for-lain" (v. 1209).

In *Guy* it is the steward Morgadour who accuses the hero of having dishonored the Emperor's daughter.

"Into his bour wiþ strengþe he ȝede

& bi þi douhter his wille he dede" (vv. 3227 f.).

In these cases the resemblance between the villains lies chiefly in the identity of the charges which they make.

It is to be noted that the hero in each case has a love affair with the king's daughter. Clarice, it is true, does not become the wife of Guy; but the account of her relations with him has the characteristics of a romantic story, leading up almost to the marriage altar, when the hero recollects Felice in time. In the other cases the love results in marriage, and both Rymenhild and Josian take the initiative in the wooing. In both cases separation occurs as the result of the treachery of defamers, but the later fortunes of the heroines show wide divergence. However, so far as the general relations go, we again find strong similarity.

The last character of the group, the one I have called *the second lady*, is of slighter importance, and its presence here may be questioned. I mean by this Reynild in *Horn* and the King of Aumbeforce's daughter in *Bevis*, each of whom loves⁶ the hero, but later becomes the wife of the hero's friend. Oisel, whose name I have placed in brackets in the table, can scarcely be included, except that it is through Guy's victories over Tirri's enemies that she becomes the wife of the hero's friend.

Of course I do not mean to say that the reappearance of this group of characters is sufficient ground for thinking that any one of this group of romances is derived directly or indirectly from any other.⁷ But it does seem to me that there was a common narrative fund which every one felt at liberty to

⁶ In *King Horn* it is not actually stated that Reynild loves Horn, though marriage is suggested to Horn by her father. However, in *Horn et Rimel* and *Horn Childe*, the love of Lemburc and Acula (corresponding to Reynild) is a prominent feature.

⁷ Nevertheless, cf. P. C. Hoyt, "The Home of the Beves Saga," P.M.L.A., 1902, pp. 237 ff., who thinks the resemblance between *Bevis* and *Horn* sufficient to indicate that the former is derived from the latter.

draw upon, which indeed was common property, since no one knew precisely whence it came. If we wish to know where it existed, it is not too vague to say that it existed in the stories already familiar, in the conventional incidents and characters which were found there, and which were being more and more conventionalized as they appeared again and again. Perhaps some elements were conventionalized out of existence; but one must think, from the state of the romantic literature which has been preserved, that the number of such was small.

It has been noted, no doubt, that in discussing this group of *dramatis personæ* nothing has actually been said about character. Rather has it not been plot, and are not the *dramatis personæ* (so viewed) merely the pegs to which the plot is tied? This question must be answered with a modified affirmative. What has been indicated thus far is that when a situation is used for a second or hundredth time in a romance, there is a strong tendency to place the new pegs about where the old ones were. Character, in the stricter sense, is then indicated only by the general relations of *dramatis personæ* to the plot. This, of course, does not sum up character; and a study of the characters as such will, I believe, add some confirming evidence of the existence of this recurring group.

Stock dramatis personæ.

Before going on to discuss characters as distinguished from *dramatis personæ*, it is worth pointing out that there are in the romances, as indeed in fiction of a later date, stock figures who are of little or no value as characters, but who do mean something to the plot. Thus in *Horn* and in *Bevis* there is the conventional porter. The only function which he serves is to delay the action by supplying occasion for an altercation at the entrance to the castle. Thus in *Horn*:

He com to þe gateward,
þat him answerede hard.
Horn bad undo softe,
Mani tyme and ofte.
Ne miȝte he awynne

þat he come þerinne.
 Horn gan to þe gate turne
 And þat wicket vnspurne.
 þe boye hit scholde abugge;
 Horn þreu him ouer þe brigge,
 þat his ribbes him to brake;⁸

And supþe com in atte gate'' (vv. 1067 ff.).

In *Bevis* the account is still more detailed. The hero, seven years of age, after getting the better of the porter in a word encounter, cleaves his head (vv. 394 ff.). The porter, it seems, nearly always stands at the gate to refuse admittance and to suffer for his refusal.⁹

The suggestion sometimes made that the minstrel is taking revenge for rebuffs suffered by his class is perhaps not altogether without foundation. The aim seems to be to make the porter a ridiculous figure. The humorous intention is sometimes marked.¹⁰ Perhaps the porter in *Macbeth* is distantly akin to the porter of romance.

More intimately connected with the plot, and more important for the revelation of character in others, is the maid of the heroine. The fact that she does not appear in *Horn*, *Havelok*, or *Bevis* is a slight indication of the fact that they are not true

⁸ In *Horn Childe* the porter's shoulder bone was broken (HCh vv. 958 ff.).

⁹ In *John de Reeue* (Percy Folio, vol. II), vv. 719 ff., is a similar dispute between hero and porter, with the result that John

''hitt the porter vpon the crowne,
 With that stroke hee ffel downe,
 fforsooth as I you tell.''

In *Sir Cleges* the hero gains admission to the king by agreeing to give the porter one-third of the gift he shall receive, and asks that the gift be twelve strokes, of which the porter gets his share in due time (vv. 247 ff.). Cf. Kölbing's note to *Bevis*, A l. 419. Also see Hall's note to *Horn*, vv. 1067, 8; *Tristram*, vv. 619 ff.; Gautier, *Chivalry*, Eng. transl. by Henry Frith, London, 1891, pp. 369 ff.; C. Boje, *Über den Altfranzösischen Roman von Beuve de Hamtone*, Beihefte zur *Zeitschrift für rom. Phil.*, xix, Halle, 1909, pp. 71 f. The porter sometimes plays a different part; cf. *Gawayn and the Grene Knyght*, vv. 91 ff., and *Floris and Blancheflor*, vv. 749 ff.

¹⁰ As in *Sir Cleges*; cf. note preceding.

romances of chivalry. Rymenhild may have sent a maid for Apelbrus to summon him for the first interview, but, if so, there is no indication of the fact. When Josian desires to communicate with Bevis, she sends a man. The absence of the romantic element in *Havelok*, of course, almost precludes the possibility of such a character appearing. In *Guy* there is a hint of this personage. Guy has just made a declaration to Felice, and swoons from the violence of his emotions. Felice bids a maid to lift him, which she does, weeping.

"Bi god of heuen," sche seyd,
 "& ich wer as feir a mayd,
 & as riche king's douhter were
 As ani in þis warld here,
 & he of mi loue vnder-nome were
 As he is of þine in strong manere,
 & he wald me so o lou þerne,

Me þenke y no myȝt it him nouȝt werne" (vv. 609 ff.).¹¹

But Felice rebukes her for commiserating Guy. One need only glance at the French *Horn et Rimel*¹² to note a marked contrast with the maid of *Guy*. Here Herselote is the natural messenger of Rimel; she tells in the bower of what is going on in the hall; she receives her mistress's confidences, comforts her when distressed, praises the lover, and is on hand to assist in emergencies. This is the conventional part of the maid. It is to be found repeatedly. Lunete plays the part in Chrétien's *Ivain*. In *William of Palerne*, Alexandrine is not only a confidante; she plays almost the part of a fairy in bringing William and Melior together, having power to cause dreams. Iseult's maid is perhaps the most distinguished of all, performing more than one important service for her mistress.¹³ Playing a part of far

¹¹ Cf. *Generydes*, vv. 4630 ff., where the maid takes the part of the knight against the reproaches of her mistress.

¹² Edited by Brede and Stengel, *Das Anglo-Normannische Lied vom Wackern Ritter Horn*, Ausgaben und Abhandlungen, vol. viii.

¹³ From these instances it is evident that the maid plays in medieval romantic literature the same part which maid or attendant so often plays in the later dramatic literature.

greater importance than the porter, the maid of romance has a more developed personality. She is faithful as a matter of course, loyal to lover as well as to mistress, resourceful, self-sacrificing, brave. But she belongs essentially to the chivalrous romance; she has no place in the very different type of romance to which the exile-and-return group belongs.

If the maid is a kind of good fairy in the romances, the steward is almost always a malevolent agency. Unlike the maid, he is well represented in our group. It is he frequently who envies the hero because of the favor bestowed upon him by the king, or because of his superior knightly qualities.

A steward was wiþ King Ermin
þat hadde tijt to sle þat swin;
To Beues a bar gret envie
For þat he hadde þe meistrie (*Bevis*, vv. 837 ff.).

The steward of the King of England also hates the hero. Bevis visits the king:

And alle þe barouns, þat þer were,
On Beues made glade chere,
Boute þe steward of þe halle

He was þe worste frend of alle (vv. 4303 ff.).

He later tries to slay Bevis and, like the steward of Armenia, pays for his treachery with his life. In *Guy* there are several stewards. The most typical, Morgadour, did his best to discredit Guy with the Emperor.

Traytour he was, and full of envy (v. 2962).

He, too, lost his life at the hands of the object of his envy. The steward of Duke Otous (vv. 4753 ff.) is slain by Guy while trying to lead away the wounded Tirri. After the death of Otous, his kinsman Berard becomes the Emperor's steward (v. 6497); persecutes Guy's friend Tirri; shows his lack of honor by wearing two coats of mail in his combat with Guy (st. 187) and by trying to rid himself of his dangerous antagonist by casting him in the sea with the bed on which he is sleeping; but finally he, too, succumbs to the hero's valor (sts. 208 ff.). Again, the steward of Earl Florentin attacks Guy while a guest in his

master's castle, and his head is cleaved with an axe (vv. 6899 ff.). Thus in the romances of *Bevis* and *Guy* alone the appearance again and again of a treacherous, envious steward is striking. He appears very frequently elsewhere. The chief villain of *Generydes*, Amalok, is the steward of Auferius, King of India. He adds adultery with the Queen to treason against his lord. In *Sir Cleges* the steward commits the same offense and suffers the same punishment as did the porter.¹⁴ The envious character of "Kay the seneschal," while not quite so offensive as that of most stewards, is perhaps due to the association of his position.¹⁵ The typical steward, however, is treacherous as well as envious;¹⁶ not a coward (for cowards are rare in medieval romance), yet with the manners, the sneakingness, so often associated with cowardice.¹⁷

Other lay figures are palmer, merchant, beggar. The palmer or beggar is frequently the hero disguised. But he may be merely the bearer of news. A palmer tells Guy of the war between the Emperor of Almaine and Duke Segyn (vv. 1803 ff.). It is from a palmer that Horn hears of the wedding preparations when he lands in Westernesse with his Irish force (vv. 1027 ff.). No doubt the palmer was a natural bearer of news. Thus the false news which Bevis, disguised as a palmer, tells Yvor, is instantly accepted and acted upon. Bevis asks a palmer where

¹⁴Referred to above, p. 436.

¹⁵ For Kay at his worst, cf. the French romance *Ider*, in which he is guilty of the use of poison. See, too, G. Paris, in *Hist. Litt.*, XXXI, p. 160, apropos of Kay in the *Escanor* of Girard d'Amiens: "Il parait avoir pris surtout le type du senechal dans les romans de Chrétien où, comme ici, sa mauvaise langue est le plus grave de ses défauts."

¹⁶ Cf. *Arthur and Merlin*, vv. 80 ff.; *Squire of Low Degree*, vv. 283 ff., etc.; *Sir Triamore*, vv. 61 ff., etc.; *Merline*, vv. 47 ff.; *Amis and Amiloun*, vv. 205 ff.; *Sir Degrevant*, vv. 1633 ff.; also "false steward" in "Sir Aldingar" (Child, No. 59).

¹⁷ Of course there are good stewards now and then, as is the case with Guy's father. However, the association of steward with self-seeking and an ugly disposition seems widespread. In this connection it is interesting to compare No. LXII of the *Fables* of Marie de France (ed. by Warnke, Bibliotheca Normannica, vol. VI), "De Aquila et Accipitre et Columbis".

to find King Yvor and his Queen, Josian, when he approaches Mombraunt (vv. 2049 ff.).¹⁸ Beggars are necessary to show the hospitality of lord or lady and to furnish an opportunity for the disguised hero to slip in with the crowd. The number thirteen, so frequently mentioned, springs from the custom of inviting thirteen beggars to appear at wedding and other feasts in honor of Christ and the Apostles. Thus Guy is one of thirteen beggars fed by Felice when he finally returns home after his long pilgrimage (sts. 278 ff.). In *Ponthus and Sidone* the mother of Ponthus is discovered by him among the thirteen beggars at the feast celebrating the regaining of his kingdom (pp. 119 f.). In *Horn et Rimel* it is a beggar instead of a palmer whom Horn meets on his return to his beloved. Merchants, too, may be messengers. Guy learns from Greek merchants of the war between the Emperor of Constantinople and the Sultan (vv. 2801 ff.). Merchants are also used for taking away children. Bevis is sold to merchants (vv. 505 ff.), and Reinbrun is stolen by merchants who pass through the country (*Guy*, C. vv. 8680 ff.).¹⁹ A large number of subordinate *dramatis personæ* of various sorts is naturally characteristic of the *roman d'aventure*, in which the social life is more complicated than in the *chanson de geste*.²⁰

Typical Characters and Medieval Life.

¹⁸ For cases in French medieval narrative where there is an exchange of clothing with a palmer, cf. Boje, p. 70.

¹⁹ Cf. Prologue to "Man of Law's Tale" (*Cant. Tales*, B, vv. 127 ff.), where merchants are apostrophized:

Ye seken lond and see for yowre wynnynges;
As wise folk ye knowen al thestaat
Of regnes; ye been fadres of tidynges
And tales, bothe of pees and of debaat.
I were right now of tales desolaat,
Nere that a marchant—goon is many a yeere—
Me taughte a tale, which that ye shal heere.

²⁰ Two giants, brothers, whom the hero meets at different times and slays, seem a convention; cf. in *Bevis* Grander and his brother (vv. 1721 ff.; 1859 ff.); *Eglamore*, vv. 300 ff., 513 ff.; *Daurel* (*Hist. Litt.*, XXX, p. 137).

Looking again at this list of *dramatis personæ*, not this time as elements of the story, but as figures typical of medieval life, one sees at least four stand out as significant: (1) the king; (2) the knight; (3) the lady; (4) the vassal. These are not entirely exclusive of each other, as the knight may be king, and the vassal is, of course, usually a knight. However, the characteristic king is usually the father of the hero, or some lord under whom the hero takes service; the hero is nearly always an ideal knight; the hero's beloved is invariably represented as an ideal lady; and it is usually in a friend of the hero that faithful service to one's lord is best exemplified. So, for practical purposes, there is little or no confusion, and some light may be thrown, too, on the phase or phases of society for which the romances were produced, and also perhaps on the society in which they have enacted their subsequent history.

From the tremendous host of kings in medieval literature two great figures stand out—Charlemagne and Arthur—the one, at his best, the king of the *chanson de geste*, and the other, at his best, the king of chivalric romance; the one leading his hosts against the enemies of his country and fighting at their head; the other, for the most part at least, loosely controlling a band of knights errant, who are incessantly engaged in adventures for the sake of honor or for the sake of the "fair lady." In the so-called romance of Germanic origin, there is, of course, nothing to approach the splendor of either of these figures. But in these romances the kings are certainly more nearly related to Charlemagne than to Arthur. They are kings of national war. Murri, father of Horn, was such a man, although the primitive conditions which seem to underlie the story would make him little more than a tribal chief. With two knights he awaits the onset of the Saracens, and loses his life defending his territories. Nothing is said in the way of characterization, save that he was "gode king" (v. 33), as were also Ailmar of Westernesne (v. 219) and Purston of Ireland (v. 782).² Apelwold, the father of Goldborough, was also a bold warrior.

²This suggests the "se waes gōd cyning" of *Beowulf*, although the term "good" is perhaps even more conventional in the romances.

He was þe beste kniht at nede
 þat euere mihte riden on stede,
 Or wepne wagge, or folc vt lede;
 Of kniht ne hauede he neuere drede,
 þat he ne sprong forth so sparke of glede,

And lete him knawe of hise hand-dede (vv. 87 ff.).

In *Horn Childe* King Hafeolf is a bold warrior, fighting against the enemies of his country—the Danes and the Irish. In *Guy* *Apelstan* is represented as leading the English forces in their struggle with the Danes. In other words, the kings in this group of romances are fighters, usually defending their country against invaders. The king who, like Arthur and Alexander, conquers the world, belongs to a different type of romance.

Of exceptional interest is the account of King *Apelwold* in *Havelok*, because there is nothing precisely comparable to it elsewhere in the romances. Here is a king who is not merely a leader of warriors, but a lawgiver and a strong executive. We certainly have a picture of an ideal king as seen by the eyes of the middle and lower classes, by those who desired, not glory, but comfort and peace.²² He loved God and holy church; he hated robbers and hanged outlaws. Chapmen might go through England with their wares fearlessly.

þanne was Engelond at ayse (v. 59).

Moreover, he was friendly to the fatherless (vv. 75 ff.) and

Hauede he neure so god brede,
 Ne on his bord non so god shrede,
 þat he ne wolde þorwith fede
 Poure þat on fote yede" (vv. 98 ff.).

²² The very enumeration of the classes who loved him is suggestive.

It was a king bi are dawes,
 þat in his time were gode lawes
 He dede maken, an ful wel holden;
 Hym louede yung, him louede holde,
 Erl and barun, dreng and kayn,
 Knict, bondeman, and swain,
 Wydues, maydnes, prestes and clerkes,
 And al for hise gode werkes (vv. 27 ff.).

Here, surely, if anywhere, we get the ideal king of merchant and laborer.²³

The heroes are more likely to be individualized than other characters. Nevertheless, the greater part of their traits are thoroughly typical. The ideal knight of this group is one of great personal beauty and strength, who hates infidels, enjoys battle, is a faithful lover of one woman. He is often rude, sometimes cruel, always pure. He stands opposed to the chivalrous, gentle, often immoral knight typified in Lancelot.

In these romances little is said, for the most part, regarding the personal appearance of the *dramatis personæ*. This is not

²³ W. W. Comfort, "The Character Types in the old French *Chansons de Geste*", P.M.L.A., XXI, pp. 279 ff., distinguishes three treatments of the king in the *chanson de geste*. He is represented (1) as grandiose and epic, less only than God; (2) as weak, old, sometimes cowardly; (3) as a mere political necessity—this last under the influence of the Breton cycle where the king is only "a fixed point of support, on which the leading characters in the story are made to lean". The noble king of *Havelok* seems English. However, the weakness of the kings in *Horn*, *Bevis*, and *Guy* seems to relate them to class (2). The Emperor of Almaine (in *Guy*) is clearly of this class; his capture while on the chase is an incident connecting him with stories of Charlemagne.

It may be worth while to note here that both *Bevis* and *Guy* had fathers who were good stewards. They furnish the nearest parallels to the account of *Apelwold*. *Bevis's* father *Guy* "kept well Englonde in his days".

He set peas and stabelud the laws,
þat no man was so hardye,
To do another velanye (M. MS. vv. 43 ff.; passage
missing from one set of *Bevis* MSS.).

In *Guy*, Syward was a steward of similar virtues.
þei a man bar an hundred ponde,
Opon him, of gold y-grounde
þer nas man in al þis londe
þat durst him do schame no schonde
þat bireft him worþ of a slo,
So gode pais þer was þo (vv. 137 ff.).

In *Apelwold's* time one could carry red gold upon his back and find none to trouble him (*Havelok*, vv. 45 ff.).

If one thinks of Chrétien's romances, one recognizes how incongruous similar lines would appear if found in them. The same is equally true of nearly all of the super-refined chivalric romances. Compare, too, the Alexander romances. Generosity, not justice, is the chief virtue of the chivalric king.

so likely to be the case with the hero. Thus of Horn the author says at the beginning:

Fairer ne miste none beo born
 Ne no rein vpon birine,
 Ne sunne vpon bischine:
 Fairer nis non þan he was.
 He was briȝt so þe glas,
 He was whit so þe flur,
 Rose red was his colur.
 In none kinge riche
 Nas non his iliche (vv. 10 ff.).²⁴

His physical beauty continues to receive attention. He is the "faireste" (v. 173); Ailmar admires his "fairnesse" (v. 213); Apulf says "he is fairere by one rib þan eny man þat libbe" (vv. 315 ff.); when he visits Rymenhild the bower is lighted "of his feire siȝte" (v. 385);²⁵ Berild has never seen so fair a knight come to Ireland (v. 778); King Þurston speaks of his "fairhede" (v. 798); and at the close the author says:

Her endeþ þe tale of horn,
 þat fair was & noȝt vnorn (vv. 1525 f.).

Havelok likewise is very beautiful (v. 2133) and well-shaped (v. 1647). Bevis was a "feire child," and King Ermin said of him:

"Be Mahoun, þat sit an hiȝ,
 A fairer child neuer i ne siȝ,
 Neiþer a lengþe ne on brade,
 Ne non, so faire limes hadde!" (vv. 535 ff.).

In *Guy*, too, not much is said of the personal appearance of the hero, not nearly so much as in *Horn*. There is nothing especially distinctive about the traces of description one finds, as they are the commonplaces.

²⁴ For numerous parallels, see Hall's notes. Medieval romancers were inclined to insist, as here, that their heroes were the most beautiful in the world; cf. *William of Palerne*, vv. 4437 f.

²⁵ The shining face is common, but more frequently belongs to women. In Chrétien's *Cliges* the hero and Fenice are so beautiful that they make the palace shine (vv. 2755 ff.).

The hero's strength and valor are of great prominence in all romances, but there are certain variations of greater interest than are found in descriptions of personal appearance. In *Horn* the hero's strength is frequently the object of direct praise from the *dramatis personæ*. The Admirad says to him, "þu art gret & strong" (v. 93), and adds that if he lived, in time he "scholde slen us alle" (v. 100); Ailmar says the strength of his hand shall become famous (vv. 215 ff.). The author of *Havelok* also takes great delight in his hero's physical prowess, and speaks directly to the audience:

For þanne he weren alle samen
 At Lincolne, at þe gamen,
 And þe erles men woren alle þore,
 Was Havelok bi þe shuldren more
 þan þe meste þat þer kan:
 In armes him noman ne nam
 þat he doune sone ne caste;
 Havelok stod ouer hem als a mast.
 Als he was heie, so he was strong,
 He was boþe stark and long;
 In Engeland was non hise per
 Of strengþe þat euere kam him nere (vv. 979 ff.).

Again and again this brute strength is brought out. Havelok eats more than Grim and his five children (vv. 793 f.); at Lincoln he upsets "sixtene laddes gode" and carries "wel a cart lode" of fish; his strength is admired by Ubbe, who thinks he should be a knight (v. 1650); he slays three men with one blow of a "dore-tre" (v. 1806); he puts the stone at the first throw so far that all competitors depart (vv. 1052 ff.). There is on the part of the author a certain simplicity of delight in the overwhelming strength of his hero that is almost unique. In the rapid succession of incidents in *Bevis* there is little time for commenting on the hero. However, there is a word at the beginning of his fighting career.

Be þat he was fiftene ȝer olde,
 Kniȝt ne swain þar nas so bolde,
 þat him dorste aȝenes ride
 Ne wiþ wreppe him abide (vv. 581 ff.).

In *Guy* we have gone so far toward the romance of chivalry that the emphasis, so far as direct description goes, is on something else than strength, which is left to be inferred from many a deed of valor.²⁶

On the other hand, the mental character and accomplishments of the hero are emphasized in *Guy*, especially on the knightly side, and in *Havelok* on the homely side, while in *Bevis* and in *Horn* they are neglected. Indeed, scarcely anything is said of Horn's mental or moral characteristics. He was "of wit þe beste" (v. 174), "wel kene" (v. 91). His teachableness and good nature are indicated.

Horn in his herte laȝte
 Al þat he him taȝte.
 In þe curt & ute
 & elles al abute

Luuede men horn child (vv. 243 ff.).

In *Havelok* again there is the unique quality which was noted in the account of the physical characteristics, but even more marked. The author probably had in mind that Havelok would make a good king like *Apelwold*, but he has made him seem more like a strong, rather slow-witted, but happy peasant. His life at Winchester, which is described most fully, makes him seem to be a powerful, mild-tempered boy.

Of alle men was he mest meke,
 Lauhwinde ay, and blipe of speke;
 Euere he was glad and blipe,
 His sorwe he coupe ful wel miþe.
 It net was non so litel knaue, . . .

²⁶ It is worth noticing here that something is said in regard to *Guy's* dress apart from armour; when he first calls on Felice he was arrayed in a "silken kirtell" that was so "well setting" that there was no need to amend it (vv. 211 ff.).

For to leyken, ne forto plawe,
 þat he ne wolde with him pleye:
 þe children that yeden in þe weie
 Of him he deden al her wille,

And with him leykeden here fille (vv. 945 ff.).

Not only is his kindness shown by his playing with the children; it is shown in the care he later takes of his foster brothers and sisters and in the mercy offered to Godrich. He is as observant of law as *Apelwold*. Only after due trial may Godard and Godrich be executed.

Thus does the author intend for us to see him—strong, cheerful, merciful, fearless, law-abiding. It may be questioned whether he intended that *Havelok* should so appear, but he surely was lacking in initiative. It is *Goldborough* who arouses in him the ambition, or at least stirs it to the acting point, to regain his kingdom. It is *Ubbe* who collects the friends of *Havelok* in Denmark. *Havelok* would have been a happy peasant. He is a true member of the lowly classes—strong in body and in mind, whole-hearted, loving peace better than war, but fearless when called upon to fight, rather than a fiery king, full of aggressive ambition, or a luxurious, generous monarch such as the nobility admired.

But *Guy* is a hero of chivalry—not of the *Lancelot* type, nor of the *Galahad* type, although approaching the latter in the religious devotion of his later years. He stands somewhere between *Horn* and *Bevis*, on the one hand, and *Lancelot* and *Galahad* on the other. He has the knightly education which *Horn* had. He knows the craft

Of wode, of Ryuer, of all game (C. v. 171).

He is generous. He gives rich gifts to parsons and poor knights,
 And to other oft þeue he wolde

Palfrey or stede, siluer and golde,

Euery man after his good dede

Of *Guy* vnderfangeth his mede (C. vv. 181 ff.).

Moreover he became ill from loving too well, and fought long years merely for the sake of a woman. *Guy* stands in fairly

strong contrast with the heroes of *King Horn*, of *Bevis*, and of *Havelok*, and approaches the heroes of another type of romance.²⁷

Somewhat less need be said about the heroine in these romances. The part played by Goldborough is so small that she may be dismissed almost with a word. She is seen as a great lady, resenting her forced marriage to one apparently far beneath her in rank, and later urging her husband to regain his crown—a figure of strength, described as “swiþe fayr” (v. 111), the “faireste woman on liue” (v. 281), as bright (v. 2131), as chaste (v. 288), and

Of alle þewes was she wis

þat gode weren, and of pris (vv. 282 f.).

The absence of a love element prevents the development of her character. She is queen rather than woman.

The character of Rymenhild, on the other hand, is that of a woman, individual in some respects, yet typical of a class, of which Josian, in *Bevis of Hamtoun*, is a member. Her individuality may be said to lie largely in the very prominence of certain typical characteristics. Her appearance is passed almost without comment. She is “Rymenhild þe briȝte” (vv. 382, 390) or “Rymenhild þe ȝonge” (v. 566). It is decidedly by her actions that she is interesting. It is a primitive, undisciplined

²⁷ Cf. W. W. Comfort, P.M.L.A., XXI, pp. 307 ff. on the Hero in the *chansons de geste*. See p. 325 for distinction between hero of earlier and later *chansons de geste*: “If any differentiation were attempted between the heroes of the earlier and those of the later poems, it would consist in this: the heroes of the later poems are less passionate, less fiery, less implacable; they feel the softening influence of woman and of many of the principles of Christian charity which the later Middle Age included in the terms *chevalerie* and *courtoisie*.” A comparison in these respects of *Bevis* with *Guy* is suggestive. But even in the latest *chansons de geste*, according to Comfort, there remains in the hero “an unmistakable trace of his genealogical connection with the paladins of Charlemagne. In spite of his love adventures, and the lorn maidens, and the kind fairies, his mind harks back to his old-time foe, the Saracens, and to his duty to God. If we are not mistaken, this undercurrent of sturdy faith, this seriousness of purpose, was just the quality which was sought by a portion of the public as contrasted to the more imaginative, fantastic, and *vain* heroes of the Breton cycle.”

nature. In love and in hate she is uncontrolled. She loved Horn "þat neȝ heo gan wexe wild" (v. 252). There is no reserve in her wooing. When Apulf enters her bower she at once takes him in her arms. When she finds she has been deceived by Apelbrus she is as unrestrained in her rage.

"Schame mote þu fonge
& on hiȝe rode anhonge. . .

Wiþ muchel schame mote þu deie" (vv. 327 ff.).

When Horn refuses to plight his troth to Rymenhild, she swoons. She is all in tears over her dream of the net (v. 654). When she thinks Horn lost forever, she is ready to slay herself.

Heo feol on hir bedde,
þer heo knif hudde
To sle wiþ king loþe
& hure selue boþe,
In þat vlke niȝte,
If horn come ne miȝte
To herte knif heo sette,

Ac horn anone hire kepte (vv. 1195 ff.).

She is as faithful as passionate. When she knows that she is about to be forced into a hateful marriage, she sends a messenger to seek Horn (vv. 933 ff.). She watches the sea for her absent lover (vv. 975 ff.). Even to the last she has Apulf on the tower with his eyes searching the great expanse of water. Altogether she is a wilful, passionate creature of uncontrolled impulses, yet constant in love. The author does not think her worthy of direct description. Yet he has created a striking figure.²⁸

²⁸ As an instructive contrast, an examination of this same character elsewhere is valuable. In *Horn Childe* (the later English version) and *Horn et imel* she has lost her primitive traits. She is not wholly passionate; she devises plans. In HCh

þe miri maiden hir biþhouȝt
In what maner þat sche mouȝt

Trewe love for to ginne (vv. 364 ff.).

She wins Horn's favor first by costly gifts. Even more striking is the equanimity with which she learns of the deceit which the steward has practised in substituting Haperof for Horn (vv. 349 ff.). The heroine of HR is also a highly developed character, eager, it is true, but not merely impulsive.

As stated, Josian belongs to the same type. The account of her beauty is made somewhat more striking by the use of a figure of speech.

So fair zhe was & briȝt of mod,

Ase snow opon þe rede blod (vv. 521 f.).

She was also "hende" and "wel itauȝt," although she knew nothing of Christian law (vv. 525 f.). Like Rymenhild she loves passionately, and it is her persistence and her willingness to change her faith which win her lover. Perhaps it is the same persistent courage which gives her the strength to slay her undesired husband. A strong woman, equal to emergencies, faithful to lover and husband—less attractive than Rymenhild, but by no means unworthy—is the heroine of *Bevis of Hamtoun*.²⁹

But in Felice we have a lady of the romance of chivalry. Fifteen lines at the outset and more elsewhere are devoted to her beauty, although the author remarks that it is so great that he cannot describe it (v. 60).³⁰ Her accomplishments are equally remarkable.

²⁹ Apparently of the same type, but interesting as tending away from it, is Melior, the heroine of *William of Palerne*. After falling in love with William, who apparently is somewhat mildly attached to her, she analyzes her feelings in a fashion which Josian and Rymenhild would never dream of. Yet she is the really active one of the pair; is the pursuer rather than the pursued indeed, acting, however, through her maid Alexandrine. William's love, it seems, becomes really passionate as the result of a dream which Alexandrine, by some magic power, introduces into his mind while he sleeps. Even then he merely stops eating, makes no effort to win the beloved; who comes to him while he is asleep in a garden. This figure is so much sophisticated as to seem considerably removed from Rymenhild and Josian. Yet she is not much farther removed from the type than is Rimel of *Horn et Rimel*.

³⁰ In the Celtic romances elaborate descriptions of dress as well as personal beauty are found. Cf. *Libeaus Desconus*, vv. 868 ff.; *Launfal*, vv. 926 ff. The brightness of the woman's face is characteristic. In *Richard Coer de Lion* a lady is "bryȝt as the sunne thorough the glas" (v. 76); Cf. *Legend of Good Women*, Prologue B, vv. 232 f., *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, vv. 184 ff.; also the ballad "Lamkin" (Child No. 93), in which the head of a murdered woman, hung in the kitchen, makes the hall shine. On the personal appearance of women of chansons de geste, cf. Gautier, *Chivalry*, pp. 306 f.

All the vii artis she kouthe well,
 Noon better that euere man herde tell.
 His maisters were thider come
 Out of Tholouse all and some;
 White and hoore all they were,

Bisy they were that mayden to lere (c. vv. 81 ff.).²²

In love she is as reserved and cruel as Rymenhild is unrestrained and generous, promising her lover favor repeatedly, only to withdraw it, until he has become the most famous knight in the world. After that her conduct shows a marked change. She seems a very mild and dutiful wife. When Guy becomes a pilgrim, she feeds the poor and prays for her absent lord, so that there is no better woman in the world (st. 279). As with Guy, there is in her traces of the ascetic ideal. The best woman, as well as the best man, is one withdrawn from the common life.

Here again we find the *Guy* far removed from the other romances. Josian and Rymenhild are passionate, primitive creatures, willing to do all and suffer all for their lovers. Felice is a woman more cultivated, more self-contained, more selfish, more of a "lady," and her later piety and devotion but emphasize the fact that she is a member of a class. Yet she in turn is far removed from the Guinevere type, and farther still from the heroine of so many of the later French romances—a married woman who devotes her life to intrigues with a lover.²³

²²Josian was educated in "fysik and sirgerie" and "knew erbes mani and fale", by the use of one of which she was able to make herself undesirable. This accomplishment is hardly comparable to the learning of Felice. The manner of its introduction is also significant, as it is told merely to account for Josian's ability to pick out the right herb. Knowledge of herbs, however, was not an unusual accomplishment and seems connected with skill in leechcraft. Acula, in HCh (vv. 790 ff.) and Gouvernail in *Tristrem* (vv. 1200 ff.) are instances. This accomplishment is in no sense characteristic of the romance of chivalry, but is rather a popular element which survives in the romances.

²³On frankness of speech and other characteristics of women of the *chansons de geste*, cf. Gautier, *Chivalry*, pp. 308 ff., and Comfort, *op. cit.*, pp. 359 ff. See discussion of love, pp.

While the type which I have called the *vassal* shows less variety, it is extremely interesting. In Apulf, in Grim, in Saber, in Herhaud, as well as in other characters, one sees the relation of lord and follower at its best. Apulf, appearing only for an instant now and then in the story of *Horn*, leaves a vivid impression. There is never a hint of self-seeking. Not for an instant will he take advantage of Apelbrus's deception, when Rymenhild, thinking him Horn, declares her love. During Horn's long absence, he remains in Westernesse to guard the mistress for her lover. Herhaud, Grim, and Saber, likewise, are always willing to sacrifice all for their respective lords. Here is a glimpse of the more beautiful side of chivalry. However, it needs no emphasis here, as it is one of the most evident of the attractive features common to the whole range of medieval romance.³²

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(*To be Continued.*)

³² Cf. Comfort, *op. cit.*, pp. 307 ff., on the relations of vassal and lord in the *chansons de geste*.